

Statement by H.E. Mr. Edward Nalbandian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia at the 19th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Dublin, December 7 2012

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to convey my gratitude to the Chairman-in-Office, Eamon Gilmore and his team for the significant contribution to the activities of the Organization throughout the year, as well as to commend the Irish Government for the warm hospitality and excellent organization of this Ministerial meeting.

Thanks to the efforts of the Irish Chairmanship and the constructive stance of many delegations a number of important initiatives have been introduced.

I would like especially to mention the Irish Chairmanship's "Helsinki + 40" initiative which is aimed at the realization of a vision of free, democratic, common and indivisible security community envisaged in the Astana Commemorative Declaration.

Mr. Chairman,

In the political-military dimension of our cooperation confidence and security building measures as well as arms control remain key priorities for the OSCE. We welcome the proposal of Vienna Document Plus Decision on Prior Notification of Major Military Activities and further modernization of this document.

We welcomed the priority of the Irish Chairmanship on Good Governance. It is our priority as well. In cooperation with the OSCE Office in Yerevan the Government of Armenia has been implementing a project aimed at promotion of good governance through the rapid regulatory simplification mechanism, also known as a "regulatory guillotine". Together with other measures undertaken by our government, it has had a positive impact: according to the World Bank rating on "Doing Business", Armenia has significantly improved its position by rising from 50th to the 32nd place.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Armenia is implementing a wide package of reforms to further consolidate the democratic institutions, strengthen the rule of law, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, improve electoral procedures and relevant legislation, strengthen independent judicial system and expand the role of civil society.

Armenian Parliamentary elections of May 2012 were assessed by ODIHR to be in compliance with OSCE commitments, and other international standards for democratic elections. Armenia continues to cooperate with ODIHR to implement recommendations of its elections' observation mission. We are determined to capitalize on this achievement to hold the Presidential elections of 2013 in line with the highest democratic standards.

Mr. Chairman,

Strengthening Efforts to Combat Racism and Xenophobia remains high on the agenda of OSCE.

Many international organizations on human rights alerted about flagrant cases of racism, intolerance and violations of human rights in Azerbaijan, on the policy of hatred against Armenians.

Azerbaijan is not only ignoring the expectations of the international community, but is constantly making new steps going against the values of civilized world. The latest such case is the Azeri government's release and glorification of the murderer Safarov, who had slaughtered with an axe Armenian officer in his sleep, during a NATO program in Budapest simply because he was Armenian. The Azerbaijani leadership made him a symbol of national pride and an example to follow by youth. The world reaction was unanimous in condemning what was done by Baku, which has seriously undermined the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiation process and endangered the fragile regional stability.

Azerbaijan poses a threat to the security of the region by constantly menacing to use force against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia along with daily war-mongering, by rejecting the proposals on the consolidation of the ceasefire, by systematic provocations and ceasefire violations, by ceaseless acts of vandalism towards the Armenian historical and cultural heritage.

Azerbaijani authorities are notorious for violations of fundamental freedoms in their own country, and are now trying to spread this behavior onto others. Their approach is - if a state is not recognized, then the people living there should be deprived of the human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to this logic, the people in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic should not exercise the right to freedom of movement, be cured, get education, use drinking water and even give birth.

Armenia highly appreciates the efforts of the heads of the OSCE Minsk group Co-Chair states, aimed at the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Latest statement adopted in Los Cabos in June of this year by Presidents Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama and Francois Hollande, is the fourth one made by the heads of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. It is clear to whom they address the main messages. Armenia is unanimous with the Co-Chair countries in achieving exclusively peaceful settlement of the conflict. As the Co-Chair countries, we have many times urged to respect the ceasefire agreement of May 1994 and to abstain from hostile rhetoric, which fosters feelings of enmity and increases tension.

As the United States, Russia and France, we also regret that in spite of the call in the joint statement of Deauville of May 2011 breakthrough was not achieved at the Kazan Summit in June 2011, and it was because of the non-constructive position of Azerbaijan.

Despite the intensive efforts of the three Co-Chair countries during the last 4 years: 15 summits, several dozens of meetings on ministerial level, several dozens of visits of the three Co-Chairs to the region, it has been impossible to reach a breakthrough in the conflict resolution, because the Azerbaijani side rejected one after another all proposals presented by the mediators.

Mr. Chairman,

While Armenia values the three Co-Chairs' efforts for the continuation of the negotiating process and preservation of peace, we witness continuous Azerbaijani campaign against the Minsk Group Co-Chairs which have the mandate of OSCE as the only negotiating format for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Azerbaijani officials are trying to take the negotiation process out of this format, to replace the mediators, to denigrate Co-Chairs' efforts to find a negotiated solution.

The Azerbaijani side is also continuously assaulting the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, in spite of his and his team's efforts to not allow the escalation of the situation on the ground.

It has become habitual for Azerbaijan to backtrack even on agreements to which it had previously consented to. Despite the agreement on the creation of a mechanism to investigate the ceasefire violations, as you know, Azerbaijan did everything to prevent its creation, even threatening to veto the entire OSCE budget.

This was the case again after the Sochi Summit of January of this year. Despite the reached agreement to accelerate accord on the Basic Principles for a Settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, confirmed by Los Cabos Statement, Azerbaijan by its maximalist approaches is seeking one sided advantage in the negotiating process and is doing everything possible to neglect, even to reject this agreement.

Regardless of Azerbaijan's destructive stance, Armenia will continue its efforts towards the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict exclusively through peaceful means and on the basis of the purposes, principles and norms reflected in the UN Charter and the provisions of L' Aquila, Muskoka, Deauville and Los Cabos statements of the three Co-Chair countries' Presidents.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, I would like to congratulate Mongolia for its accession to the OSCE and express Armenia's support to the incoming Ukrainian Chairmanship. Thank you.